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SUBJECT: NIGER MOVES OUT OF LAST PLACE IN HUMAN DEVELOPMENT  
RANKINGS

REF: 06 NIAMEY 1255 (NOTAL)

¶1. Niger has moved out of last place in the recently updated UNDP Human Development Index (HDI). The HDI measures the performance of countries in three dimensions of human development: a long and healthy life, as measured by life expectancy at birth; knowledge, as measured by the adult literacy rate and the combined gross enrollment ratio of primary, secondary and tertiary schools; and a decent standard of living, as measured by GDP per capita in US dollars (converted using purchasing power exchange rates). The recently released 2007/2008 Human Development Report ranks Niger at 174, up from the last place 177 it had held for the last few years, moving ahead of Guinea-Bissau, Burkina Faso and Sierra Leone.

¶2. As indicated in the following table, Niger's improvement in the HDI is due to a substantial increase in life expectancy.

-	2007/2008	2006	2005
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Life expectancy at birth	55.8	44.6	44.4
Adult Literacy Rate	28.7	28.7	14.4
School enrollment rate	22.7	21.0	21.0
GDP per capita	781	779	835

¶3. Comment: Of course the actual life expectancy did not increase by 11 years in one year, just as the actual literacy rate did not double from 2005 to 2006. The apparent improvements more likely reflect changes in statistical methodology. An EU official in Niamey attributes the increase in life expectancy to an updated demographic survey that revises infant and child mortality rates downward.

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